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Dear Friend,

Gas prices in Illinois soared to record highs again this week—reaching over \$4.14 a gallon.

The price at the pump has risen 285% since 2001. For many working families, there appears to be no end in sight.

There is no quick fix to high gas prices. We must adopt a long term energy policy that reduces our dependence on foreign oil and promotes the use of alternative and renewable energy sources like ethanol, biodiesel, wind, solar, coal and safe nuclear power. Investing in new energy sources will directly benefit 17th District farmers and businesses and create thousands of new jobs in our region.

In December, Congress passed and the President signed energy independence legislation that included an unprecedented investment in homegrown biofuels like ethanol and biodiesel and raised auto mileage standards for the first time in 3 decades.

Congress also has a responsibility to act in the short-term to reign in rising gas prices.

Just this week, I supported legislation to give the Federal Trade Commission authority to investigate and punish cases of gas price gouging, give grants to mass transit authorities to lower fares for commuters pinched at the pump, compel the oil industry to start drilling or lose permits on the 68 million acres of undeveloped federal oil reserves, and take steps to curb excessive speculation in the energy futures markets.

Last month, I voted to temporarily suspend shipments of crude oil to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. This move could ultimately lower consumer gas prices by five to 24 cents a gallon. Despite initially opposing it, President Bush signed the bill into law after it was passed by overwhelming bipartisan majorities in the House and Senate. We will stop filling the Reserve at the end of June.

The House has also passed legislation to redirect billions of dollars in tax cuts for oil companies into the development of renewable energy. ExxonMobil earned \$40.6 billion in 2007—the largest corporate profit in American history. It is immoral for Congress to continue subsidizing Big Oil at time when average families can barely afford their daily commute.

President Bush and some of his allies in Congress believe we can lower gas prices by lifting a decades-old ban on offshore oil and natural gas drilling. I disagree.

The Bush Administration's own Energy Information Administration says drilling offshore would have no impact on price until 2030, and then it would be "insignificant."

And the very same oil companies begging for the chance to drill near our beaches and coastlines have already leased 68 million acres of land from the federal government on which they could start drilling right away.

Experts say this already leased land could produce 4.8 million barrels of oil a day, doubling domestic production and cutting

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imports by a third. And already leased deepwater drilling sites could produce an additional 1.26 billion barrels in total.

But oil companies seem to be in no hurry to start drilling for any of that oil.

There is no reason we need to lift the offshore drilling ban unless we have exhausted the resources already available to us.

Rest assured that my work on this issue is not complete. I will continue to do everything in my power to lower gas prices in the short-term and end our dependence on foreign oil in the long-term.

Sincerely,



Phil Hare
Member of Congress

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